



Connecticut School Counselor Association

A Chartered Division of the American School Counselors Association

Testimony of Virginia DeLong
School Counselor, Lebanon Middle School
Chairman of the Board, CT School Counselor Association
in support of
SB 186 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SCHOOL COUNSELORS.
Education Committee- February 26, 2018

Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee, my name is Virginia DeLong and I am a school counselor in Lebanon and Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Connecticut School Counselor Association. Thank you for the opportunity to offer **testimony in support of Senate Bill 186- An Act Concerning School Counselors.**

Senate Bill 186 adds school counselors to the statutes where currently the term guidance counselor is used. When I received my Master's Degree in Education in 2004 it was with a concentration in School Counseling as "guidance" programs no longer existed. Traditionally, guidance counselors worked with students on choosing career paths and helping students to get into college. Now the role of the school counselor still includes that work with students, but also includes data collection and analysis, providing academic support and social emotional learning for all students. School counselors follow a framework for learning that provides students with much needed supports throughout school.

I would like address the strong need for Comprehensive School Counseling programs in our schools. The State of Connecticut currently has a Comprehensive School Counseling framework (2008), which is currently being updated, that aligns with the American School Counselor Association National Model. This framework includes student mindset and behavior standards that connect with the Common Core State Standards. Our framework consists of a foundation that focuses on a vision and mission for the program; program management that includes counseling competencies and data collection; the delivery component that includes a school counseling curriculum; and accountability component that analyzes data. Comprehensive programs are intended to be delivered starting in elementary school through grade twelve and includes the themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change. Through this program a school counselor uses a curriculum that follows a scope and sequence and addresses the academic, career and social emotional domains. In addition the comprehensive framework includes responsive services like individual, group and crisis counseling, as well as collaboration with staff members, administrators, parents and outside community agencies.

School counselor education programs, unlike traditional guidance programs train future school counselors in data driven decision-making, counseling techniques, social emotional learning, and how to prepare our students to be college and career ready. Our training puts us in a unique position to work with all students on our caseloads in preventative and responsive services. By using school-wide data to identify student barriers to success, school counselors are able to design interventions to improve academic achievement, attendance and behavior. Placing school counselors in all school levels will allow students to receive these critical services starting in elementary school. Research has shown that students have better attendance, greater academic



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success, fewer behavioral issues and a greater sense of belonging when connected to a counselor who can provide focused services. Our goal through our programs is to provide students with the skills to be successful in school and productive citizens.

The world right now needs school counselors at every level more than ever. School counselors are essential mental health providers in our public school systems. Our counseling training provides us with a strong understanding of a child's development which allows us to identify when students are struggling not only academically but behaviorally. This, combined with our considerable counseling training allows us to recognize when students are in emotional distress and may require immediate interventions. Increasing the number of school counselors specifically can improve the preventative services that are provided to all students through comprehensive programming. We are a key component in creating safe schools for our students and helping to prevent tragedy before it strikes.

Comprehensive school counseling programs address the whole child and are necessary for the success of all our children in CT. Let's have CT lead the way and serve as an exemplary model for other states when it comes to school counseling. I would therefore ask that you amend the underlying bill to include the Connecticut School Counselor Association proposal to have the State Board of Education adopt guidelines and recommendations for a comprehensive school counseling program. It is vital that we support students within our public school system by providing access for all students to a school counselor. The language states:

The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the Connecticut School Counselor Association, shall adopt guidelines and recommendations to ensure that all students have access to a comprehensive school counseling programing. Such recommendations shall ensure that academic, social-emotional, and post-secondary and career readiness programming is delivered by a certified school counselor with adequate training. The State Board of Education shall make any such guidelines and recommendations available to local and regional boards of education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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